

*Trader (J.W.)*

PRESIDENT'S

Annual Address

TO THE

Medical Association,

OF THE

STATE OF MISSOURI,

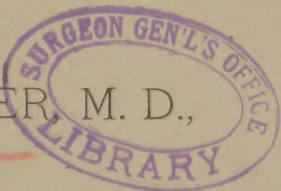
*At its meeting held in Kansas City, April 17, 1877,*

BY

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## PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL ADDRESS.

By J. W. TRADER, M.D.

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To-day are we brought under renewed obligation to the Great Creator and Upholder of all things, not only for the preservation of our lives and health, but for the privilege of this assembly. As we advance in years the more are we convinced that "none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself;" that among men there exists a community of interest and feeling that will not be ignored. So important, indeed, is this connecting link, that whenever this great sympathetic cord is touched every member feels the vibration. Medicine, Statesmanship and Theology are an inseparable trio. If they do not conduce to the welfare and happiness of man they not only fail to fulfill their legitimate end, but increase the burdens that humanity is forced to bear. "The statesman can treat of but few subjects. Its eloquence is massive, but not fitted to every day life. It is like Corinthian columns, fitted only for the architecture of temples. The pulpit has a wider landscape before it. All conditions of men are marshaled in its mighty vale. Its eloquence may roll out in organ tones, heavy and sad, or it may be a carol for a Christmas morning."\* No less conspicuous stands out the profession of medicine—not to supplant, neither to hinder, but to aid the eloquence of Statesman and Divine in alleviating the grief and sins of earth, which so completely encompass us all.

We come before the people of this great commonwealth, to-day, I trust, as something more than mere practitioners of medicine. We are proud to know that we can rise to the plane of Physicians and Doctors in fact, whose province is not only to cure, but to prevent disease. As conservators of public health we

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\* Prof. Swing, on Pulpit.

NOTE—I take this occasion to especially thank Dr. Toner, of Washington City, and Dr. Wells, editor of the *Sanitarian*, of New York city, for special favors in connection with this paper.—J. W. T.



cannot escape the responsibility of pointing out the best plan known to the laws of health, for the preservation of the physical well-being of the race. The devastation of disease can be as well provided against as the impending storm. The inroads of fatal and wide-spreading maladies may be stayed, and often prevented altogether, if the well-known revelations of science are not entirely disregarded. Every vessel lost at sea—every railroad disaster, shows some culpable disregard of well-established laws. Scientific men have repeatedly pointed us to the sequence of these violated laws, and taught us how to avoid them.

As a professedly learned body, into whose care has been entrusted the health of humanity, we cannot afford to be insensible to the great responsibility resting upon us, or to betray this trust. Every epidemic that sweeps over the land is a reproach upon the name of our profession. Whether by neglect or ignorance we fail to rebuke the pestilence, the odium is just the same, and not only renders our great medical assemblies little less than a farce, but tarnishes the lustre, to a greater or less extent, of every individual member. Dr. Benjamin Rush, in his enquiry into the sources of summer and autumnal fevers of the United States, very justly remarks: "To every natural evil the Author of Nature has kindly prepared an antidote. Pestilential fevers furnish no exception to this remark. The means of preventing them are as much under the power of human reason and industry as preventing the evils of lightning and common fire. I am so satisfied of the truth of this opinion that I look for a time when our courts of law shall punish cities and villages for permitting any of the sources of bilious and malignant fevers to exist within their jurisdiction."

Of the ten or twelve States which have organized Boards of Health, five or six only publish annual reports. From these may be shown the great importance of State medicine. Our own State has never taken any official action in this matter, although one of the most important, in regard to geographical situation, of any of the States or Territories. Hitherto it has been a hard matter to harmonize the Statesman and the Physician. The reason is, no doubt, the impossibility of our law-makers to comprehend the importance of the subject, or to be convinced that, in this age of reckless immorality, there are not personal motives,

only, influencing our actions. Hence, physicians who have approached our legislative bodies upon topics of medicine, have usually met with obstacles in the shape of suspicious fears, if nothing more. The manner, however, in which sanitary science is discussed, both in Europe and this country, cannot fail to attract the attention of those in whose power it is to protect the people by the enactment of proper laws. It is not possible that the mass can be educated up to such a point of moral perfection, as to insure a kind of spontaneous adoption of the best known methods, to secure the comfort and health of each other, or of a community. The idea of liberty, that too many entertain, denies the rights of others. This is why we ask legislation. We are satisfied that good must result from a proper sanitation. We know of no other method that will effectually encompass this end. A respectful appeal, given in candor, should be presented to all general and local boards of government, until a favorable notice is taken and the proper laws passed that will insure these blessings.

The very respectful address of the American Medical Association, together with the address of the local Medical Society of New York, called forth this clause in Governor Robinson's message: "Several gentlemen of great eminence in their profession, have asked my attention to the subject of a State Board of Health. They believe that such an institution would render essential service in the prevention of sickness and the preservation of life and health. They claim that in almost every case where local epidemics have prevailed with a severity and fatality which seemed mysterious, their origin can be traced to some neglect of sanitary precautions, or to some course which a properly organized board of health would have discovered and removed. Important as the subject is, it has been impossible for me to find time for such an examination of it as would justify any specific recommendations. I can only ask your careful consideration of it. I do this the more willingly because I am assured that it is not intended that any expense shall be incurred by the State beyond a moderate salary for the secretary of the proposed board." New York received a new impetus by this friendly notice of the Governor, and her scientific and medical men are busy at work to bring about the proposed reform. It seems to



me a matter that will admit of no controversy as to its practical utility. The small amount of State funds that it would require to secure all the necessary arrangement for enforcing proper sanitary laws, is as nothing when compared to the great boon to be enjoyed. In my opinion the time is not distant when, on account of the diffusion and rapid generalizations of scientific knowledge, the greatest obstacle will be removed. The indifference manifested upon this and kindred subjects, by the mass of the people, has been caused, in a great measure, by want of information as to the value of such regulations as are necessary to stamp out endemic and epidemic diseases. There can be no trouble in convincing any one who will but investigate the subject for themselves, of the advantages to be gained, and the great good that is sure to follow this species of legislation. It is our business, and moreover our duty, to properly inform the people and educate them in these things. Constituted as our country is we cannot expect to thrust upon the people any species of legislation that may arouse jealousies or partake too much of a local interest. So well have our politicians become versed in the power of the will of the people, that they not only wait for the popular voice, but will work upon said voice and shape it, if possible, to meet the exigencies of party, rather than appeal, as statesmen, to the intelligence and understanding of men. But few will ever know of the labor and research—pecuniary and personal privations of the men who have given the best moments of their lives in bettering the condition of large districts of country rendered almost uninhabitable by pestilential poisons. Many are silently working to-day, and we can scarcely realize the strength of the great army whose vanguard is now approaching.

It is not the revelation of anything new, but simply carrying out laws of hygiene that were known and practiced by the ancients from time immemorial. The Greeks attached great importance to sanitary laws. Hippocrates tells us that "the city of Abydos had been several times depopulated by fever; but the adjoining marshes having been drained, it became healthy." "Ancient Rome was once the seat of so many fatal epidemics that the Romans erected a temple to the goddess Febris." The vast marshes existing about the city were ordered drained, and sewers were constructed, insomuch that *Pliny* speaks of them as the

great navigable underground streams of the city. This system of drainage, which continued to the days of the Cæsars, rendered Rome healthy. "Three hundred years before the Christian era, the Pontine Marshes were so notoriously unhealthy that Appian Claudius, by draining and bridging them, succeeded in rendering them comparatively free from paludial fevers"; and by his great Appian way (made memorable by the weary tread of the Apostle, as he, after that starless and moonless night, sought to lay his appeal before Cæsar) opened up a highway that has withstood the traffic of two thousand years. This all added to the sanitary condition of Rome. After the invasion of the Goths, a free course was again given to the waters, and the re-establishment of those marshes has proved one of the abiding disasters of said invasion. To-day the soldier cannot stand upon his guard or walk his round, in certain seasons of the year, under the influence of these marshes, without suffering from this fever. No other inhabitant is seen—every house is vacant, and everything looks desolate. Restore to Rome her sewers, and these unsightly places will be rendered habitable, and instead of the miasmatic stench, the aroma of flowers will make the air again fragrant and healthful.

London, in the days of Sydenham, was infested with epidemics of pestilential fevers and dysentery. The mortality from a type of intermittent fever alone, even in not densely populated districts, averaged two thousand annually. All this has disappeared since the present system of sewerage and drainage has been adopted. A case of intermittent fever originating in London is now never known.

Every one who reads a daily paper will occasionally notice a paragraph stating that the average longevity of the cities of London and Paris has increased from 30 to 50 years within the last two decades. It is not necessary to know that Liebermeister, and Budd, and Richardson, and Pettenkoffer have written largely upon this subject. We have the facts that, although London, so compactly built that many of her streets have not had an unobstructed ray of sunlight to shine upon them for a thousand years—with a soil saturated with filth, her death rate is far below that of any of our great cities in this country, with a population at all approximating that of the metropolis. London, according to recent reports, shows a death rate of  $21\frac{1}{4}$  deaths



to 1,000 inhabitants, Paris,  $21\frac{1}{2}$ ; while in New York it is 32; and in Boston,  $30\frac{1}{2}$  to the 1,000 inhabitants.

The class of disorders that sweep over the country, with such fearful mortality, are generally those that are amenable to sanitary regulations. Cholera, small-pox, dysentery, yellow fever, scarlet fever, diphtheria, &c., cannot exist where there is no nidus. Filth, it is true, may accumulate for a long time without breeding pestilence. There must be a germ, and when the germ of disease once finds its lodgment in a favorable nest, desolation and death, like a great conflagration, will sweep over a vast district before its power can be arrested.

We do not entertain the Utopian idea of commanding the ravages of disease and death to cease, for we recognise the fact that,

"Death! great proprietor of all—  
Will seize the Doctor too."

Yet in the matter of state medicine we have a power to exercise for good that must be felt long after we shall have ceased to be.

I earnestly recommend that you appoint, at this meeting, the necessary committee to co-operate with local and state governments in perfecting a plan for organizing a state board of health.

There is another subject, intimately connected with state medicine, that deserves separate notice. I refer to the social evil. It appears that this question has exhausted the patience and remedies of both moralist and legislator. There is no concealing the fact that this evil has become, not only wide-spread, but one of the most obstinate, loathsome, degrading disorders with which we have to contend. By a system of non-interference, we virtually suffer its ravages to spread, and many innocent are made to suffer. The moral obligation of every true physician should prompt him to act speedily and efficiently in this matter. What one or two might say or do in the remote cloisters of a busy profession would hardly arouse a moral sentiment, especially as it has slept so long. But we have the mighty voices of such men as Sims, and Gross, and Watson, and Jenner, and Simon, and Hewitt calling us to the conflict, with the unpleasant spectacle of homes destroyed, and daughters defiled, to urge us to duty. The time is propitious—the demand is urgent—and if we fail to meet the emergency, we are cowards and miscreants, and unworthy



to bear the staff of Hermes. In his annual address before the American Medical Association, at its last meeting, Dr. Sims says, "Syphilis is a greater scourge than yellow fever, and cholera, and small-pox combined." There is no controversy about the wide-spread influence of this malady. We find it poisoning the sources of life; deteriorating the whole human family; rendering existence, in many cases, miserable; and sapping the foundations of society everywhere.

Quoting Watson, Dr. Sims further adds, "It counts its victims by the thousands and thousands, not only in the ranks of the viscious and self-indulgent, but among virtuous women and innocent children."

Sir William Jenner says, "I cannot too strongly express my convictions of the gravity of syphilis at the present time. It is one of the most fatal diseases we have in this country. I think it a disease entirely preventable. Children and others suffer largely from it without any act of their own; and I think it ought to be prevented."

Mr. Prescott Hewitt says he knows of no disease more terrible, and that it should be prevented by legislative action.

Mr. Simon says, "The infection of the brothel is carried into the marriage chamber, and in some cases affixes its obscene brand even on the offspring of such marriages."

Sir James Paget says, "It would be difficult to overestimate the amount of damage that syphilis does to the population, and that a number of children are born subject to diseases which render them unfit for life." He further adds, "We know that certain diseases of the lungs, the liver, and the spleen are all of syphilitic origin; and that the mortality from syphilis, in its later forms, is every year found to be larger and larger."

The facility with which it may be communicated, is wonderful. Kissing is a fruitful source. Young girls and children are often subjected to the infection in this way. The vulgar and unclean practice of kissing in the mouth should be tabooed by polite society under all circumstances, and especially so when we not only have to endure the bad odor of a diseased mouth or stomach, but must run the risk of being inoculated with a deadly poison. Careless midwives may not only destroy the health, but may also compromise the happiness of a household by waiting

upon their patients with dirty hands. Chamber-maids, cooks, laundry-women help to fill up the ranks of this great army of lepers—making everything impure as they themselves are impure.

Eight to ten thousand people fall victims to cancer in the United States each year. Forty to fifty thousand more waste away with consumption annually. This is not all. Our statistics tell us that these diseases are fearfully on the increase. Until recently we never thought of looking to syphilis as the probable cause of this great mortality. We appeal not only to the medical profession but to every man and woman who may have a word to say for the public weal, to say it now. A worse than leprosy is walking undisturbed and unrebuked in our midst. No washings in Abana or Pharper will heal the wounds. We must do something more.

Senator Sargent, in a speech before the United States Senate, in May, 1876, brings forward testimony to show that of the one hundred and fifty thousand Chinese on the Pacific slope, ninety-nine hundredths of the women are prostitutes. So disgustingly bold have they become that they publicly solicit upon the streets and entice even boys into their dens of prostitution.

The only remedy for this evil is, in my opinion, isolation. A strict and vigilant system of quarantine will as effectually stop this malady, as it will small-pox or any other entozoic disorder. It is true such a law would operate harshly upon some; but so does a quarantine in any case. It will never do to insult the decency of humanity by granting license to this nefarious business. Shut them up until their days of purification be past. I earnestly recommend that the Committee on State Medicine present this matter persistently before our legislators.

The subject of education demands our attention. There can be no doubt as to the imperative demand for a higher order of medical education. Our best and wisest men have been deeply impressed with a needed reform in this direction, for a long time. As yet none of the plans suggested have proved sufficient for the dilemma. International congresses and local committees have, so far, failed to establish reform. Legislation has been asked and obtained in some States, but after a trial the remedy has entirely failed, or at least has not rendered satisfaction. The more this subject is



legislated upon the more complicated becomes our relations with schools and the public. Who shall and who shall not practice medicine in a State cannot well be decided by any examining boards outside of those appointed by the profession. Although we impose the task of selecting our committees upon the judiciary an unpleasant fallibility will exist just the same. To entertain the medieval absurdity of judicial infallibility is to suppose time to be retrograding. In our limited experience, instead of peace we have witnessed a greater discord, and the more this practice is indulged in the more patent must it appear, that even the judicial ermin is spotted by the flesh. The true reformer does not look for relief in this direction. Those who would attach all the blame to the schools, contend that, at the rate the schools are turning out doctors, the country must soon become filled with uneducated men, striving to work into a living business by every hook and crook, and in many cases driving out well qualified and deserving men. They further agree that it is impossible for any system of ethics in the world to manage such a reckless horde of presumptuous incompetents. If this case would apply to the ignoramuses of the profession only we could see the justice of legislative boards. But, this is not the fact. Many of those objected to are educated and would have no trouble in procuring their license before any board you might see fit to order. In fact, the more dangerous class are the unscrupulously educated. They stand upon the street corners and cajole the passer-by like a cross-road politician. If they do not lack in culture neither do they lack in impertinence. So prominent has this fact become, that it has caused a pall to settle over the profession like the dark mantle of Nemesis. People of culture have long since ceased to honor the profession, and only honor the men who strive for a true eminence.

Another objection urged to our present system of education, is the manner in which many young men are introduced into the mysteries of medicine by what, in medical parlance, we call the preceptor. No physician, it is argued, who is engaged in active general practice can offer any very great facilities for teaching medicine. You cannot, as a rule, give bed-side experience in private practice; and even if you could this would not make a doctor. The result is, your student knows about as much as you

do in five or six months and will seek other fields of labor, or piddle about two or three years when some school will pick him up and graduate him. Now, we must admit, there is some plausibility in all these objections. Preceptors and schools are, no doubt, often sadly imposed upon, and made a kind of *pons-assinorum* for other asses to pass over. In all candor, I do not believe that the fault lies with the schools at all. So far as I am acquainted with our Western schools, I believe that their faculties are composed of educated, upright and honorable men. I doubt very much whether any of them could be induced to graduate a student whom they know to be both ignorant and incompetent. The zeal for the well being of their school would prevent this.

The question now presents itself: What shall we do to elevate the standard of medicine? I believe the remedy lies alone with us. Judges and Legislatures can have nothing to do in this matter. A competent board of Medical examiners should be appointed in every state. If there be one or more branches of Medical practice in any State, let there be one or more examining boards and each stand upon its merits. Do not ask us to amalgamate with every dogma which, to those professing it, is a mere trade. Let Medical men appoint all medical boards and the recognised State Medical Societies control them. Then we will soon bring up our standard so that neighboring medical bodies will unhesitatingly recognise us and a concert of action will be obtained. I submit these thoughts to you hoping that the committee on education may be retained and this subject properly laid before them.

We cannot well complete what we may have to say without briefly referring to the subject of medical ethics. I do not consider the science of medicine aggressive. Its prominent feature should be a retiring spirit. There is very little danger of true merit being "born to blush unseen." Theoretically we might do without a moral code; yet practically we have not only found the code convenient, but indispensable. The founders of medicine have left us a code. A careful perusal of that code will convince anyone, at all conversant with ethical teaching, that a system of true philosophy has been incorporated therein. I protest, then, against the abrogation of the code. If men can-



not display their talents under the shadows of its wings, it certainly would be best for us all if they would silently withdraw from the profession. They can operate in other fields, no less honorable and useful, in this utilitarian age. In no case do I think it expedient to invade the field of the artisan and mechanic whose business is one of the trades of the world. Neither would I set the profession on high, as something only to be touched by priestly hands. The profession in this country needs and will demand the highest order of ethics. It is not always possible to prevent sinners from sinning, but we may do much by holding firmly to our code, in preventing overt acts. If the spirit of the code is violated, that does not argue anything against its perfectness. It only shows that bad blood is mingling in the pure fountain. One of the most debasing influences in our profession is that insatiable greed of gain. No man ever amassed a large fortune that did not infringe upon the rights of others, and violate every sentiment of ethics. It is useless to talk about ethics and hoarding millions at the same time. If our ethics mean nothing more than a compact to enforce arbitrary mercenary laws, I say then, that they are false, and should be abandoned altogether. True science does not seek a patent right anywhere, or in any field. We must soon cease to know and reverence those wise men who by their labors are giving us new revelations, if their thoughts were all patented. Agassiz, when asked why he did not accept a magnificent offer to deliver a popular course of lectures, told his friend that he had no time to make money. If we but legislate for our own good, what is the use of trying to stop the spread of any disease? Let small-pox, and cholera, and scarlet fever, and syphilis have full sway, for upon these do the doctors feed. No word of condemnation should be heard against criminal abortion, for by this does the urban physician reap a handsome income. The constant violation of medical ethics by men eminent in the profession does not argue anything adversely to the code. Men are just as great sinners now as they were eighteen hundred years ago, yet we have none other than the same gospel of truth to offer them. We use our ethics to explain and control the habits of men in a moral sense, and cannot dispense with them in this or any of the relations of life. The polished and cultivated physician is the polished and

cultivated gentleman. "Sir Philip Sidney was never so much of a gentleman—mirror though he was of English knighthood—as when, upon the field of Zutphen, as he lay in his own blood, he waved the draught of cool water from his lips, handed it to a mortally wounded soldier, saying, "Thy needs are greater than mine." St. Paul describes a gentleman in his epistle to the Philippian Christians, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." Finally: to us has been left a rich legacy by the Fathers. Let us rid ourselves of all purely mercenary shysters, and command the money lenders and those that sell doves to get out of the temple, as we have a perfect right to do, that the temple may be swept and garnished for the reception of all true lovers of science, who may come to worship at her shrines. If there be any fault it is probably in failing to enforce a strict compliance with the spirit of our ethics. This fault can only be remedied by every man doing his duty. We shall expect this of every member of the Medical Association of the State of Missouri.

In conclusion, allow me to thank this body for the honor they have conferred upon me in choosing me their presiding officer for the Centennial Year of our Republic. I feel as though I stood between the centuries—a connecting link between the past and present—the dead and the living. As Cicero amid the temples and shrines of Athens, "I tread again those ancient walks where, beneath every step imagination burns."

I shall ever hold in grateful remembrance the pleasant associations of this society. It is needless for me to assure you that my sympathies shall go with you in the years to come. Whatever of talent and energy I may possess, is at your command. I expect to co-operate with you while I have a mind to act, or power to work. May your future ever be bright, and your history not only that of the beautiful, the true and the good, but may it become as firmly embedded in the great principles of liberal and scientific medicine as are the pyramids in the sands of the desert. I commend you all to Him who rules the destinies of men.





